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LRB101 22129 LAW 73152 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The American field of medicine has long been predominantly white, and systemic racism and discrimination have driven health disparities along racial lines; implicit bias has had an impact on the quality of provider services, while living in poverty has limited access to healthy food and preventive care; and

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WHEREAS, Currently, Black patients experience worse health outcomes and higher rates of conditions like hypertension and diabetes; Black babies in the U.S. are up to three times more likely to die in the days and weeks following their births compared to white babies; Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans have suffered disproportionately during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

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WHEREAS, The racist past of the medical profession has had a devastating effect on the lives and careers of Black Americans, both for those seeking care from the medical profession and for those serving in the medical profession; and

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WHEREAS, In 1934, Dr. Roland B. Scott was the first African-American to pass the pediatric board exam; he was a faculty member at Howard University and established its center for the study of sickle cell disease; he gained national

1 acclaim for his research on the blood disorder; and

2 WHEREAS, When Dr. Scott applied for membership with the
3 American Academy of Pediatrics with its one criteria for
4 admission being board certification, he was rejected multiple
5 times beginning in 1939; and

6 WHEREAS, Dr. Scott was eventually accepted along with his
7 Howard professor, Dr. Alonzo deGrate Smith, another Black
8 pediatrician; they were only allowed to join for educational
9 purposes and were not permitted to attend meetings in the
10 South, ostensibly for their safety; and

11 WHEREAS, More than a half-century later, the American
12 Academy of Pediatrics has formally apologized for its racist
13 actions, including its initial rejections of Drs. Scott and
14 Smith on the basis of their race; the group also changed its
15 bylaws to prohibit discrimination on the basis of race,
16 religion, sexual orientation or gender identity; they
17 acknowledged that the apology was long overdue and was prompted
18 by the example of another organization that confronted its
19 racist past, the American Medical Association; and

20 WHEREAS, Few medical organizations have confronted the
21 roles they played in blocking opportunities for Black
22 advancement in the medical profession until the formal

1 apologies by the American Medical Association and, more
2 recently, the American Academy of Pediatrics; and

3 WHEREAS, The A.M.A. issued an apology in 2008 for its more
4 than century-long history of discriminating against
5 African-American physicians; for decades, the organization
6 predicated its membership on joining a local or state medical
7 society, many of which excluded Black physicians, especially in
8 the South; the A.M.A.'s apology came in the wake of a paper
9 published in the Journal of the American Medical Association
10 that examined a number of discriminatory aspects of the group's
11 history, including its efforts to close African-American
12 medical schools; and

13 WHEREAS, For some Black physicians, exclusion from the
14 A.M.A. meant the loss of career advancement opportunities;
15 others struggled to gain access to the postgraduate training
16 they needed for certification in certain medical specialties;
17 as a result, many Black physicians were limited to becoming
18 general practitioners, especially in the South; some
19 facilities also required A.M.A. membership for admitting
20 privileges to hospitals; and

21 WHEREAS, By 1964, the A.M.A. changed its position and
22 refused to certify medical societies that discriminated on the
23 basis of race, but persistent segregation in local groups still

1 limited Black physicians' access to certain hospitals, as well
2 as opportunities for specialty training and certification; and

3 WHEREAS, The A.M.A. also played a role in limiting medical
4 educational opportunities available to Black physicians; in
5 the early 20th century, before the medical field held the same
6 prestige it does today, the A.M.A. commissioned a report
7 assessing the country's medical schools for their rigor; the
8 report deemed much of the country's medical education system
9 substandard; it also recommended closing all but two of the
10 country's seven Black medical schools; as the field became more
11 exclusive, it also became more white; and

12 WHEREAS, Between its restrictions on medical education and
13 its exclusionary membership, the A.M.A. played a role in
14 cultivating the profession's homogeneity, which it
15 acknowledged in its 2008 statement; it has since appointed a
16 chief health equity officer and established a center for health
17 equity; and

18 WHEREAS, In an effort to address this history of racial
19 discrimination and biases in the medical profession, Chicago's
20 largest hospitals and clinics have officially named racism a
21 public health crisis, a very real threat to the health of their
22 patients, families and communities; in an open letter, 36
23 organizations committed to improving health equity across the

1 city; and

2 WHEREAS, In addition to supporting programs that help
3 people of color find healthcare jobs, each organization is
4 pledging to provide anti-racism training for staff and create
5 new policies that promote equity; and

6 WHEREAS, The group, which collectively treats more than 8
7 million patients, includes large Chicago-based hospital chains
8 like Rush, safety nets like Loretto Hospital that treat large
9 numbers of low-income patients, and a number of
10 government-funded clinics like Esperanza Health Centers; and

11 WHEREAS, It is time for our State to collectively address
12 this racial discrimination throughout the medical profession,
13 past and present, to improve the quality of life for all;
14 therefore, be it

15 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
16 HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
17 we urge all branches of the medical profession to commit to
18 eliminating racism and recognizing biases; and be it further

19 RESOLVED, That we urge all colleges and medical
20 institutions that prepare students for careers in the medical
21 profession to focus on the recruitment of more minorities; and

1 be it further

2 RESOLVED, That we urge the State Board of Higher Education
3 to pursue and provide more scholarships opportunities for
4 minority applicants seeking to enter all aspects of the medical
5 profession; and be it further

6 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
7 presented to all members of the Illinois General Assembly, the
8 office of the Governor, the State Board of Higher Education,
9 all medical schools in Illinois, all hospitals in Illinois, all
10 clinics in Illinois, all public libraries in Illinois, and the
11 Illinois Department of Professional Regulation, with the hope
12 that they distribute a copy to all seeking licensure or
13 re-licensure for any medical-related field.